

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001903

SIPDIS

BEIJING PASS TO CHENGDU

STATE FOR SA/INS
LONDON FOR POL/REIDEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2012
TAGS: CH NP PGOV PHUM PREF PREL
SUBJECT: CHINESE PRESSURE STIFLES TIBETANS IN NEPAL

REF: A. BEIJING 9871
 B. KATHMANDU 1332
 C. KATHMANDU 1694
 D. KATHMANDU 1443

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Malinowski for reason 1.5 (b)(d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) There have been increasing restrictions on the Tibetan refugee community in Nepal. Celebrations and cultural events have been canceled on short notice by government authorities, press conferences interrupted by police and the Office of Tibet Representative detained for a day. Although many Tibetan refugees are still able to enter Nepal and transit to India, post has received credible reports of an apparent increase in refugees being turned back at the border by Nepali immigration authorities. The Government of Nepal (GON) has repeatedly declared that they will have no tolerance for 'anti-China' activities, and Prime Minister Deuba has confirmed that Chinese pressure is behind the shift in policy toward Tibetans. End summary.

"POLITICAL" EVENTS CANCELED;
MONASTERIES LEFT ALONE

12. (C) Kathmandu ref cables report incidents in which Tibetan gatherings have been halted by police or canceled by Nepali authorities with short notice to the coordinators. Office of Tibet Representative Wangchuk Tsiring has directly attributed the incidents to Beijing,

SIPDIS
stating in a letter to the Embassy that the Tibetan community has been "prevented by the concerned authorities of Nepal from organizing any cultural or social gatherings on numerous occasions because of China's interference."

13. (SBU) Tsiring's assertions are supported by the common theme of the canceled events: a link with the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan government-in-exile. In April, a cultural program sponsored by the Tibetan Youth Association to celebrate the thirteenth birthday of the Dalai Lama-recognized Panchen Lama was called off by police. In July, three separate events planned for the weekend of the Dalai Lama's birthday had to be canceled on short notice when the GON issued an official order to the Radisson Hotel not to accept any business from any Tibetan refugee groups for the duration of the celebration (ref B). Earlier this month, a Tibetan Democracy Day religious gathering was interrupted by police, and Tsiring himself was detained in police custody for most of the day (ref C).

14. (C) Conversely, purely religious events such as liturgical dances are allowed to continue with no interference from the GON as long as they are confined to a private location. Tibetan Democracy Day religious ceremonies were allowed to continue, once they were moved inside. "The monasteries are left alone," confirmed Matthieu Ricard (protect), a French citizen and Buddhist monk well-connected to the Tibetan community, "but when the (Office of Tibet) Representative lifts his little finger, if the government knows about it, they stop it."

15. (C) Tsiring has characterized GON interference with the Tibetans' freedom of assembly, which he says has been on the rise for the past two years, as increasingly frequent, persistent, indiscriminate and immediate; and he has related statements from government and police officials fingering China as the motivating force behind the crackdown. His sources "say that the Chinese Embassy tells them something, and it gets done," Tsiring told PolOff in a September 25 interview. "We have a religious activity or a cultural event, but the Chinese Embassy tells the MFA it is an 'anti-China' activity, and the MFA informs the authorities that it must be stopped without looking into

the background."

PM, GON OFFICIALS CONFIRM CHINESE PRESSURE;
KING REITERATES NO TOLERANCE FOR 'ANTI-CHINA' ACTIVITIES

16. (C) The fingers pointing north are not simply a reflex response. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba confirmed to Ambassador Malinowski earlier this month that the GON is under pressure from China about the Tibetans. Both UNHCR and the Office of Tibet indicate that GON officials of various ranks and positions have told them directly that Chinese pressure is behind the shift in treatment of Nepal's Tibetan community.

17. (SBU) King Gyanendra clearly stated Nepal's stand on his state visit to Beijing in July. "(Nepal) will not allow the emergence of elements running against the development of Nepal-Chinese ties," he was quoted as saying in the local press. "It will not permit within its borders any activities that undermine China's interests." Newly appointed Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa reiterated the statement this month. The crux of the problem, according to most Embassy sources in the Tibetan community, is that the GON is applying too sweeping a definition to "anti-China" activities, probably at the behest of Chinese officials and possibly in an effort to support the "one-China" policy.

18. (U) In July, for example, police closed down a press conference organized by a Nepali Buddhist organization to refute a widely publicized statement by the Dorje Shugden Society that the Dalai Lama was a terrorist and that Tibetan monasteries in Nepal were used for "anti-China" activities (ref D). Police interrupted Tsering as he read a prepared statement contradicting the claims, arresting two organizers and halting the conference. Newspaper reports stated that police had acted on a warrant issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and two high-ranking GON spokesmen attributed the incident to support for the "one-China" policy.

CHANGES AT THE BORDER

19. (C) Additional problems exist at the China-Nepal border. Refugees arriving at the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC) have reported increased Chinese security at the border, including undercover immigration officers dressed in village clothing as well as armed patrols. Many state that they were stopped by the Chinese on their first or second attempt to cross into Nepal and either imprisoned for a short term or sent to forced labor for up to two years.

10. (C) In addition to increased Chinese security, the Embassy received reports earlier this year that Nepali border guards were handing Tibetans back to the Chinese, despite a "gentleman's agreement" with UNHCR that would allow them to freely transit to India. According to Roland Weil (protect), UNHCR Protection Officer, sporadic reports have come from refugees arriving at the TRC who claim to have been turned around by Nepali immigration officials on their first try. Initial news came from sympathetic police at border posts who phoned UNHCR offices to report that they had "had to" turn Tibetans over to Chinese authorities.

11. (C) Weil does not believe the GON has issued a comprehensive order to turn people back, since police still occasionally escort groups of refugees to the TRC, and he added that no new reports of forced repatriation have been received since early this year. "That doesn't mean it doesn't happen, however," he cautioned, stating that information flow from the border has been hampered by the destruction of communication infrastructure. "Police can't call us even if they would want to, and we can't call them to ask what has been happening."

PROPAGANDA IN THE PRESS

12. (SBU) In early September, a series of editorials by the usually well-respected Kathmandu Post editor-in-chief Yubaraj Ghimire were published following a trip to Tibet for Nepali journalists sponsored by the Chinese government. From the opening line, the intent of the articles was clear. "China values Nepal's unequivocal support on the one-China policy," the first article began, before launching into a catalogue of possible benefits of cooperation, ranging from increased cross-border tourism to Chinese investment in Nepali industry and even the possibility of linking Nepal into railway service to

Shanghai. Further articles stated that "even if the Dalai Lama decides against getting back to Tibet... the Chinese government seems determined to protect (his position as religious leader) in deference of the religious faith and wishes of the Tibetans." But despite the parroted prose, the series captured the current situation in microcosm: struggling Nepal can benefit from a cordial relationship with China, and China's cordiality apparently has a price.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) In general, agreements between the GON and UNHCR are still functioning as intended, and the GON's relationship with the Tibetan community is tolerant on a day-to-day basis. However, Chinese pressure is changing the nature of that relationship. Though it is unclear whether the pressure is coming from the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu or from the central government in Beijing, the effect is the same: freedom of expression and freedom of assembly have been compromised and a long-standing agreement with UNHCR appears to have been unilaterally altered by the GON. The Embassy has raised this issue at the highest levels of the government, including with the Prime Minister, and will continue to stress the value that the USG places on individual rights.

MALINOWSKI